



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky in Opposition to Raised S.B. 312,
**AN ACT REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION TO STUDY BOTTLE BILL BEVERAGE CONTAINER REFUND VALUES
AND REDEMPTION FEES.**

Before the General Law Committee

March 8, 2016

This bill is innocently named, but is actually an effort to repeal the bottle law and replace it with the beverage industry's preferred version of litter control. I strongly oppose it. Having recently attended the Connecticut Recyclers' Conference, I learned that glass recycling is still a problem area for Connecticut, and only the bottles returned under the bottle law's refundable system are producing a pure stream of material that is usable. Containers mixed in with other recyclables in the curbside bins are producing worthless glass material that no one knows what to do with.

When the beverage industry gets what it wants (sell beverages without regard for the waste product), the municipalities suffer. The current bottle law puts a value on containers that are carelessly discarded by irresponsible people, and they are picked up by others. Under the beverage industry's proposal, the containers will no longer be worth anything, and will stay on the roadside, parks and beaches, where they must be cleaned up at taxpayer expense. Contrast this approach with the bottle law, under which youth groups, persons needing extra income, and good-hearted volunteers pick up the containers and cash them in—at no cost to the municipality.

If there is a flaw in the bottle law, it is that the Connecticut handling fee has never changed, unlike in other bottle law states. This flaw caused the decline and disappearance of many of the redemption centers which take in any and all brands of container and pay the citizen or school group who brings them in. I still have one of the remaining redemption centers in Wallingford. They have not had a raise in the handling fee since the law first passed. No business can survive if they have not been allowed to change their fee in 35 years.

I urge the committee to reject this bill and instead consider increasing the handling fee to keep the redemption centers alive.

